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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0236

INFO RHMFIS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//ECDC// PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001025

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2019

TAGS: PGOV PINR TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY: DPM CICEK REQUESTS US TRIP POSTPONEMENT

REF: ANKARA 971

Classified By: DCM Doug Silliman for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting on July 15, Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek requested of the Ambassador that his trip to the US -- scheduled for July 21-24 -- be postponed until September or October. Complaining bitterly about the lack of concrete results out of Northern Iraq to eliminate the PKK, Cicek said that Turkey needs to focus heavily on the tripartite talks of July 27. The Ambassador agreed to the postponement in principle, but pointed out that we could not guarantee the same high-level set of meetings in the fall. Cicek said he understood this possibility, but insisted that a postponement would be more in line with Turkey's priorities at the moment. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador met with Deputy Prime Minister Cicek in the afternoon of July 15 to brief him about the preparations for his four-day trip to Washington for an overview of our counterterrorism structure. Cicek quickly requested a postponement of the trip to sometime in September or October (after Ramadan). He argued that Turkey is focusing heavily on the tripartite meeting in Istanbul on July 27, expressing disappointment that the election atmosphere in Northern Iraq has prevented any "concrete" steps from being taken against the PKK. He complained that the PKK still convenes its assembly in Kandil, that PKK representatives are still able to travel to Northern Iraq by airplane from Europe unobstructed, and that the PKK gets supply shipments and health care easily. Cicek is hopeful that the post-election "Northern Iraqi Administration" will be more in line with the government in Baghdad, but until there are concrete steps to isolate the PKK, Turkey must focus on getting Iraq to act against the PKK via the tripartite process. He summed up his arguments saying that he did not want a "classic" routine visit, but one of substance, which could only be had after a postponement.

¶3. (C) Ambassador expressed his understanding for Cicek's position, but argued that the trip, as currently scheduled, would not be mere routine. He listed the high-level meetings we had assembled and the topics to be discussed, and pointed

out that assembling such a schedule at the height of the political season could be difficult. He noted that the Petraeus visit to Turkey was very fruitful in developing US strategy in encouraging the KRG to increase its efforts against the PKK. Ambassador pointed out that there are political steps that Turkey can take, independent of the situation in Iraq -- such as a repentance law and repatriation of refugees from Mahmour Camp -- that would help to solve the problem; he noted that US experience on such matters could be valuable to Turkey, regardless of events in Iraq. Cicek's arguments in response to this line of reasoning were to insist that his trip would nonetheless be more productive if made after the tripartite meeting made clear the disposition of the post-election KRG

¶4. (C) Comment: It is possible that Ankara is indeed focused on Iraq and is reprioritizing the tactical elements in its counterterrorism policy. The postponement may also be an attempt to pressure Iraq -- through us -- into action against the PKK. Another factor may have been an assessment on the part of the MFA that the proposed schedule -- still under construction, but from our point of view, quite promising in terms of high-level participation and concrete issues -- was insufficient to justify the visit. Cicek's reasoning also betrays the continued Turkish understanding of "counterterrorism" to be limited to PKK issues. We have continually presented Cicek's trip as one to share our experience with intelligence cooperation, interagency communication, and restructuring of our approach to counterterrorism, which will help Turkey better fight not

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just the PKK but all of the terrorist organizations active on Turkish soil. Cicek's argument that his meetings in the United States would be more productive after the Istanbul trilat assumes, firstly, that the only benefit from the trip will be on PKK issues, and secondly, that his meetings will in no way help the Turkey prepare for the trilat.

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